

CLAIMS

1. In a search engine user interface (UI), a method for providing search inquiry syntax help, the method comprising:

formulating a search engine search request; and,

5 in response to the search request, automatically supplying search syntax help.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

presenting a search engine user interface with a selectable
10 user interface edit box for formulating a search request;

wherein formulating a search engine search request includes selecting the edit box; and,

wherein automatically supplying search syntax help includes displaying a popup window with search syntax help in response to the
15 search request formulated in the edit box.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein automatically supplying search syntax help includes displaying search syntax characters supported by the search engine, where the search syntax characters are
20 selected from the group including connectors and operators.

4. The method of claim 3 wherein automatically supplying search syntax help includes displaying search syntax character definitions.

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5. The method of claim 3 wherein automatically supplying search syntax help includes supplying a list of frequently-used search syntax characters.

5 6. The method of claim 3 wherein automatically supplying search syntax help includes displaying a list of every supported search syntax character.

10 7. The method of claim 3 wherein automatically supplying search syntax help includes displaying examples in which the search syntax characters are used.

15 8. The method of claim 7 wherein formulating a search engine search request includes forming a search request with at least one search term and a first search syntax character; and,

wherein supplying examples in which the search syntax characters are used includes supplying an example in which the first search syntax character modifies the search term.

20 9. The method of claim 7 wherein formulating a search engine search request includes forming a search request with a plurality of search syntax characters; and,

wherein supplying examples in which the search syntax characters are used includes supplying an example in which the plurality
25 of search syntax characters modify search terms.

10. The method of claim 8 wherein formulating a search engine search request includes forming a search request with a first and second search term; and,

5 wherein supplying examples in which the search syntax characters are used includes supplying an example in which the first search term is linked to the second search term using the first search syntax character.

10 11. The method of claim 3 further comprising:
following the formulating of a search engine search request, submitting the search request to the search engine; and,
in response to submitting the search request, automatically closing the search syntax help popup window.

15 12. The method of claim 11 further comprising:
displaying the results of the search;
editing the search engine search request; and,
in response to the editing the search request, automatically supplying search syntax help.

20 13. The method of claim 3 further comprising:
following the formulating of a search engine search request, changing the focus of the search engine user interface; and,
in response to changing the search engine user interface
25 focus, automatically closing the search syntax help popup window.

14. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
providing a user selectable syntax help enablement option;
and,
wherein automatically supplying search syntax help includes
5 supplying search syntax help in response enabling the syntax help option.

15. The method of claim 3 further comprising:
providing user selectable search syntax help configuration
options; and,
10 wherein automatically supplying search syntax help includes
supplying search syntax help configured in response to the search syntax
help configuration options.

16. The method of claim 15 wherein providing user
15 selectable search syntax help configuration options includes providing a
popup window with frequently-used search syntax characters as a default
configuration.

17. The method of claim 15 wherein providing user
20 selectable search syntax help configuration options includes providing a
popup window with a list of every supported search syntax character as a
default configuration.

18. A search engine user interface (UI) with search
25 inquiry syntax help, the user interface comprising:

a selectable focus edit box for inputting a search request to a search engine; and,

a search syntax help popup window that automatically appears in response to selecting the edit box.

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19. The user interface of claim 18 wherein the search syntax help popup window displays search syntax characters supported by the search engine, where the search syntax characters are selected from the group including connectors and operators.

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20. The user interface of claim 19 wherein the search syntax help popup window displays search syntax character definitions.

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21. The user interface of claim 19 wherein the search syntax help popup window displays a list of frequently-used search syntax characters.

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22. The user interface of claim 19 wherein the search syntax help popup window displays a list of every supported search syntax character.

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23. The user interface of claim 19 wherein the search syntax help popup window displays examples in which the search syntax characters are used.

24. The user interface of claim 23 wherein the edit box accepts a first search syntax character and at least one search term input; and,

5 wherein the syntax help popup window displays an example in which the first search syntax character modifies the search term.

25. The user interface of claim 23

wherein the edit box accepts a plurality of search syntax character inputs; and,

10 wherein the syntax help popup window displays an example in which the plurality of search syntax characters that modify search terms.

26. The user interface of claim 24 wherein the edit box

15 accepts a first and second search term input; and,

wherein the syntax help popup window displays an example in which the first search term is linked to the second search term using the first search syntax character.

20 27. The user interface of claim 18 further comprising:

a window to display the results of the submitted search engine search request; and,

wherein the search syntax help popup window closes in response the search engine search request being submitted.

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28. The user interface of claim 27 wherein the edit box is
reselected for editing, following the display of the search results; and,
wherein the search syntax help popup window automatically
reappears in response to the reselecting the edit box.

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29. The user interface of claim 18 further comprising:
at least a second selectable user interface focus; and,
wherein the search syntax help popup window closes in
response the second user interface focus being selected.

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30. The user interface of claim 18 further comprising:
a configuration menu with a user selectable check box to
enable the syntax help popup window; and,
wherein the search syntax help popup window appears in
response to the configuration check box being selected.

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31. The user interface of claim 30 wherein the
configuration menu provides search syntax help configuration options
with default settings; and,

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wherein the search syntax help popup window displays
frequently-used search syntax characters as a default configuration.

32. The user interface of claim 30 wherein the
configuration menu provides search syntax help configuration options
with default settings; and,

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wherein the search syntax help popup window displays a list of every supported search syntax character as a default configuration.

33. The user interface of claim 30 wherein the
5 configuration menu provides search syntax help configuration options with default settings; and,

wherein the search syntax help popup window displays example of how search syntax characters are used as a default configuration.

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34. The user interface of claim 18 wherein the search syntax help popup window is responsive to the search request input into the edit box.